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ABSTRACT

This paper traces the evaluation requirements of the Title I/Chapter 1 Program since 1966 to the present, discusses the implications of the evaluations, and reports on the evolution of evaluation during this 20 year period. The evaluations are described in four phases: (1) from a nadir of low quality, utility and precision (1966-1974); (2) to a transition point (1974-1978); (3) to a point of high quality, utility and technical rigor with the implementation of the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System (1978-1981); (4) to a relaxation of standards and quality given the revised requirements of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (1981 to the present). Informal agreement among evaluators and program managers indicates that the quality of Chapter I evaluations is on the decline. Evaluation systems must be applied uniformly across the states if comparable data are to be collected and analyzed. At present, Federal agencies are not requiring that uniform data be collected on the 1981 block grants. The availability of an authoritative future source of national information about: (1) the nature of program operations; (2) the levels and types of service available; and (3) the effect of programs on the problems they are intended to address remains in doubt. (PN)

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The Evolution of Evaluation: Title I to Chapter 1

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THE EVOLUTION OF EVALUATION: TITLE I TO CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND:

In the Johnson White House of 1965, Congress enacted the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The largest allocation of ESEA funds was targeted to the then Title I of the Act, and indeed historically Title I now Chapter I has emerged as the largest federally supported elementary and secondary program in the nation's history.

Appropriations for the program have grown from $959 million in Fiscal Year 1966 to $3.48 billion in Fiscal Year 1984. The legislation whether initially Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and now Chapter I of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 (ECIA) has as its primary purpose to provide financial assistance to local educational agencies in order to meet the needs of children who are educationally deprived and who live in high impact areas of poverty. This piece of social legislation will come before the Congress again in 1987 for reauthorization hearings. Twenty years plus experience with compensatory programs have yielded a proliferation of experiences, field studies, questions--both answered and unanswered and a number of significant observations as cited by Mary Kennedy (unpublished paper, 1984).

1. The characteristics of the poverty population have changed since the program began 20 years ago, and these changes have raised questions about the nature and extent of students' need for compensatory education.

2. The program's effects on students have been measured repeatedly over the life of the program, and a variety of methods have been used to assess its impact. The weight of this evidence now appears to indicate that, on the whole, the program has a marginal effect on student achievement. This evidence raises questions about the appropriateness of the current structure of compensatory education programs.

3. There has been a considerable growth in knowledge about effective educational practices for disadvantaged children and about effective educational practices in general. That knowledge has raised questions about the extent to which practices known to be effective are being implemented in compensatory education programs, and about the extent to which such practices are feasible with the program's legal and administrative structure.

ISSUE:

Independent of (1) congressional reauthorization hearings, (2) questions on the hill, (3) pressures from constituent groups, lobbyists, educators at the federal, state and local levels, and (4) accountability demands from the General Accounting Office and the like, for twenty plus years the issue has been quite succinct--does the program work? Obviously, this question is then parsed out to smaller sub-questions i.e.

- Who is served by the program?
- What are the services provided?
- How well are the services delivered?
- What do the services cost?
- What are the effects of services on recipients?
- What are the costs and benefits of alternatives?

The information gathered through the evaluative process is obtained to facilitate making judgments or decisions about some aspects of the program. The audiences for the information depend partly on which questions are answered and may include policy makers, managers, oversight groups and the like. This description is of course deceptively simple. Matters become complex once the decision to evaluate is made. With the Title I/Chapter I Program the following issues have a significant impact on the design and conduct of evaluation studies and on the utility of the evaluation outcomes:

- Title I is not a national program in the true sense of the word. Rather it is a funding source for local educational agencies. LEAs as the eligible recipients design and implement their own "programs" consistent with federal and state guidelines.

- Achievement gains may be difficult to attribute to Title I since high risk children receive many overlays of federal and state compensatory programming.

- On a national level, when one speaks to the effectiveness of Chapter I programs, one is dealing with aggregated evaluative information from well over 14,000 different programs operationalized at the local level. Individual programmatic differences are "washed out" in the aggregate and quality control problems with data and data edits as well as sampling errors tend to be aggravated and enhanced at the national levels.

- Evaluation requirements have also shifted, changed and evolved from the inception of the ESEA legislation in 1965 to the present.

The purpose of this paper is: (1) to trace the evaluation requirements of the Title I/Chapter I Program since 1966 to the present; (2) to discuss the implications of the evaluations; and, (3) to report on and to discuss the evolution of evaluation during the 20 year period in question.

It is a premise of this paper that evaluations generally moved in four phases from a nadir of low quality, utility and precision in the mid to late sixties (Phase I) to a transition point during the early to mid seventies (Phase II) to a point of high quality, utility and technical rigor in the late seventies with advent of the implementation of the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System (TIERS) (Phase III) to a relaxation of standards and quality given the revised requirements of ECIA (Phase IV). The picture could be viewed much like a sine curve, with current evaluation quality, performance and efforts slipping to the down cycle of the curve. Negative as this may be, the sine curve is cyclical and one can only hope that after reaching a negative amplitude, that the sine curve again will be on the

upswing. Perhaps the amplitude bands will tighten given the past behavior of the evaluation system as a whole. Pictorially, this could be represented as follows:

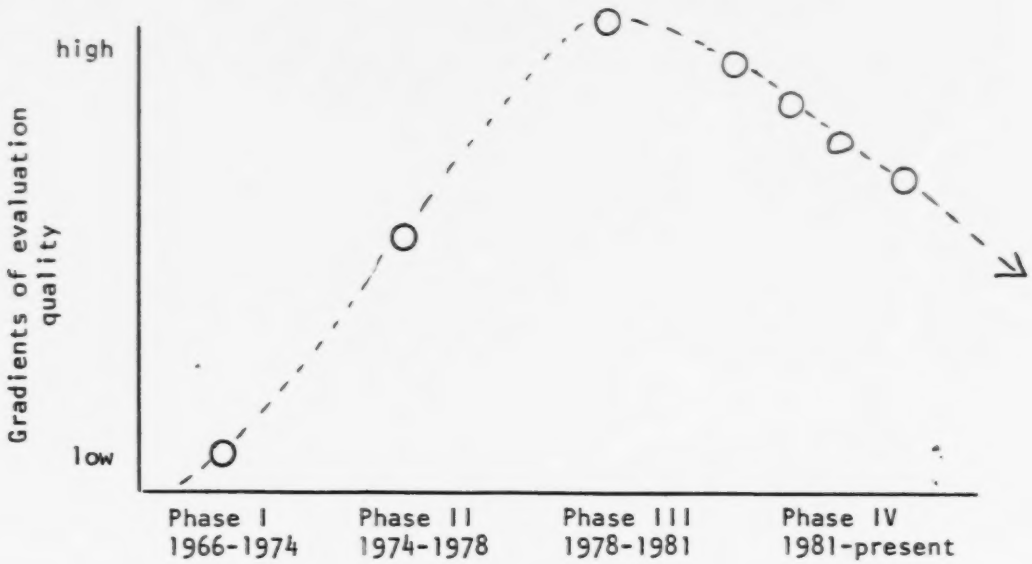

Figure 1

Subjective as this pictograph may be in terms of definitions and shape of the curve, there is informal agreement amongst evaluators and program managers at local, state and federal levels that the quality of Chapter I evaluations is on the decline.

PHASE I: THE INCEPTION OF THE ESEA TITLE I PROGRAM EVALUATION FROM 1966-1974

Title I of the ESEA of 1965 (P.L. 89-10, as amended by P.L. 93-380 and P.L. 95-561) was enacted to provide:

> "...financial assistance...to local educational agencies serving areas with concentrations of children from low-income families to expand and improve their educational programs by various means...which contribute particularly to meeting the special educational needs of educationally deprived children..." (ESEA, Title I, Section 101, "Declaration of Policy")

Evaluation of program impact was always a requirement of the federal law and specific evaluation set asides were provided for in the legislation. Delineated below are the evaluation requirements prescribed in the 1966 legislation and a description of the evaluation impact and issues associated with the implementation of these requirements. (See Table I)

PHASE II: TRANSITION YEARS
EVALUATION FROM 1974-1978

Given some of the problems cited above respective to the quality of the evaluation process for Title I, specifically the lack of comparability and validity of the data, Congress enacted Section 151 of ESEA Title I in the Education Amendments of 1974 (P.L. 93-380). Section 151 requirements were essentially maintained in Section 183, when the Education Amendments of 1978 (P.L. 95-561) were passed. Presented below are the evaluation requirements which were specified in Section 183 of P.L. 95-561 and a description of the evaluation impact. (See Table II)

PHASE III: THE TIERS YEARS
EVALUATION FROM 1978-1981

The TIERS years marked the high point of technical quality and rigor with respect to the Title I program at the local, state and national levels. By the time the TIERS system was mandated in 1978, school districts across the nation had already begun phasing in the new models. During the 1976-1977 school year, 20 states had implemented TIERS on a pilot basis. In 1977-78, nearly every state had identified local school districts who were field testing an identified evaluation model. With the advent of 1978-79, most states had begun to fully implement TIERS and to work closely with their Technical Assistance Centers (TACs) and with the U.S. Office of Education. The implementation of TIERS was not without its debates on technical rigor and programmatic issues.

Although many state and local educational agencies far surpassed TIERS, in terms of both design and sophistication of their evaluation models, nonetheless, TIERS catalyzed positive movement for the field of evaluation. State agencies without clear mandates or guidelines for program evaluation used the TIERS system as a vehicle for evaluating not only Title I programs but other compensatory evaluation programs. In addition to Title I, other federally funded as well as state funded programs during the seventies also carried with them clear directives for program evaluation. These evaluation set-asides prompted advancements and movement in the overall technology of program evaluation. It is apparent that such advances would not have been possible without this type of external stimulus or indeed pressure. (See Table III)

PHASE IV: POST TIERS
EVALUATION FROM 1981 TO PRESENT

The Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981, was passed by Congress on July 31, 1981. All chapters of the act took effect beginning October 1, 1982 and were authorized through FY 1987. It was the Reagan administration's intention through the block grants to shift control over educational policy away from the federal government back to state and local agencies. The budget authority for the block grants in 1982 was reduced to 80 percent of the total sum of the combined programs in 1981.

The basic components of the Act consists of three chapters. Chapter 1, "Financial Assistance to Meet Special Educational Needs of Disadvantaged Children," is a rewrite of ESEA Title I. The new language draws upon provisions in the old ESEA Title I law such as retaining the allocation formula and the emphasis on low-income children, but also provides some simplification and relaxation of previous requirements.

Traditionally, categorical programs have had a strong political lobby and vested interest group to provide their support base. It is no secret that continued funding for these programs has been guaranteed not on the outcomes of the program or evaluation data but by legislation. Accountability is vested in the cloak of regulation, guidelines and procedure. The preservation of an intact Chapter 1 -- "Financial Assistance to Meet Special Education Needs of Disadvantaged Children" is a manifestation of the power and concern of the special interest groups for disadvantaged students.

For block grant programs, funds must be allocated and utilized in accordance with law, statute and administrative regulation. Accountability for the block grants took three basic forms:

1. descriptive reporting of clients served, fiscal accounting, services offered including program description and implementation process,

2. impact (effectiveness) evaluation, and

3. monitoring of programs by advisory groups.

Over the years, educational evaluation, accountability and reporting efforts at national, state and local levels have matured as witnessed by TIERS the Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS) and many others. The aforementioned are offered as only illustrative examples without comment on technical rigor, adequacy or total acceptance by the evaluation community. The point being made is that evaluation, accountability and program monitoring were coming into their own as tools for enlightened decision-making and program planning and redirection. The sophistication in evaluation is due primarily to muturation of the field itself but in no small part is also due to the valuation demands placed on state and local program managers by the power of federal statute and regulation. Indeed, federal evaluation regulations have done much to catalyze lethargic state and local agencies into more structure, rigor and technical accuracy and adequacy with respect to evaluation planning, implementation and utilization.

Current provisions for evaluation and reporting in the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 are minimal but pose significant evaluation problems at the local, state and national levels. (See Table IV)

SUMMARY:

The block grant legislation has the ongoing tension of insuring accountability while giving grantees operational flexibility. The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act and the policy of the current Administration have sharply curtailed Federal participation in block grant administration. The

Federal government has chosen to rely more heavily on accountability mechanisms that give a retrospective view or program accomplishments than on others that might involve it more directly in program decision-making. Depending on how these are implemented, and depending on the scope and nature of the States' voluntary efforts to establish and maintain common reporting systems, data collected across the Nation may not be comparable. This may affect the Federal Government's ability to ascertain progress toward its national objectives, should it choose to do so. (Government Accounting Office, 1982)

The block grant enacted in 1981 places responsibility for program evaluation at the State level. If the history of the Federal agencies under the earlier block grants can be used to predict the problems that the States will encounter, one would expect the States to differ substantially in the manner and vigor with which they pursue program evaluation. Varieties of strength in current evaluation functions and perceptions about accountability may also make for differences among them. Funding problems associated with recent cutbacks in Federal aid may sharply curtail State evaluations despite the mandate for State evaluation activities. (Government Accounting Office, 1982)

Tracking federally supported activities, recipients, and dollars is a major evaluation function. Whether Federal funds support activities that advance national objectives is historically of central interest to the Congress. Tracking weaknesses in the earlier block grant programs aroused congressional concern and led to the creation of management information systems and other such mechanisms. However, the changes in Federal and State responsibilities for evaluation under the new block grants may have opened a gap in the ability to assess nationally how well block grant programs achieve the national objectives that the legislation was designed to address. (Government Accounting Office, 1982)

Evaluation systems must be applied uniformly across the States if comparable data are to be collected and analyzed. At present, the Federal agencies are not requiring that uniform data be collected on the 1981 block grants, although voluntary efforts are under way in some areas. The availability of an authoritative future source of national information about (1) the nature of program operations, (2) the levels and types of service available, and (3) the effect of programs on the problems they are intended to address remains in doubt. (Government Accounting Office, 1982)

With the Chapter I program, the history of evaluation evolution is readily apparent. We are on the declining slope of the sine curve from an evaluation perspective. A number of current efforts are currently under way which will shed more light on the outcomes of Chapter I programs. A large grant award was made to the National Institute of Education (now part of the U.S. Department of Education) to study the Chapter I program in all of its aspects. The planned activities of this effort include: (1) synthesizing recent data on state agency responses to ECIA, Chapter I; (2) a survey of school districts; (3) analysis of existing school district records; (4) collection of research syntheses; (5) nature of administrative activities; (6) review of the history of audit exceptions; (7) influence of

federal, state and local agencies on their respective policies; (8) review of studies of state compensatory education programs; (9) district procedures for choosing schools and students; (10) study of local allocation of resources; (11) processes by which districts and schools design and deliver services; (12) survey of schools; and, (13) study of students' whole school day. This report will be ready in time for the congressional reauthorization hearings for the Chapter I legislation. The General Accounting Office is also in the process of looking at the evolution of evaluation from Title I to Chapter I. It will be interesting to see the results of these investigations as they bear on the program effectiveness issue. Independent of the findings, the constituent lobby for serving the educational needs of disadvantaged children is strong and is a major force to contend with on the Hill in terms of action for this social program that has sustained itself for the past 20 years. As all evaluators know, decisions are often made with or without data in a socio-political environment. As an evaluator would that we could harken back to the rigor of TIERS. It remains to be seen what role evaluation played in the climate of reduced evaluation and reporting requirements at the national, state ad local levels.

TABLE I

Evaluation from 1966 - 1974

EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS	IMPACT AND ISSUES
An LEA could receive Title I funds only if: "...procedures are adopted for evaluating...the effectiveness of the programs assisted under this title in meeting the special education needs of educationally deprived children; ...such evaluations will include... objective measurements of educational achievement in basic skills..." (Section 124(g), ESEA Title I) In turn, the SEAs must assure ED that: "Each State Educational agency shall make...periodic reports...evaluating the effectiveness of programs assisted under this title and of particular programs assisted under it in improving the educational attain- ment of educationally deprived children..." (Section 172, ESEA Title I)	Title I reports did not provide a consistent basis of information regarding the impact or effectiveness of the Title I program nationally. Differences in: (1) style and substance of the report; (2) evaluation methodology; (3) assessment techniques; (4) types of participation, and (5) achievement data. made the possibility of aggregating, synthesizing and utilizing the data at a national level near or nil. Additionally, it was also not clear if evaluations conducted at the local level would indeed be useful in terms of providing information on program strengths, impact or educational benefits to the students. (English et al., 1982 and Rossi, et al., 1977)

TABLE II

Evaluation from 1974 - 1978

EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS	IMPACT AND ISSUES
"...(a) Independent Evaluations. - The [Secretary] shall provide for independent evaluations which describe and measure the impact of programs and projects assisted under this title. Such evaluations may be provided by contract or other arrangements, and shall be made by competent and independent persons.... "...(b) Evaluation Standards and Schedule. - The [Secretary] shall (1) develop and publish standards for evaluation of program or project effectiveness in achieving the objectives of this title, and (2) develop... a schedule for conducting evaluations... designed to ensure that evaluations are conducted in representative samples of the local educational agencies in any State each year.... "...(d) Evaluation Models. - The [Secretary] shall provide to State educational agencies, models for evaluations of all programs conducted under this title...which shall include uniform procedures and criteria to be utilized by local educational agencies and State agencies, as well as by the State educational agency in the evaluation of such programs.... "...(e) Technical Assistance. - The [Secretary] shall provide such technical and other assistance as may be necessary to State educational agencies to enable them to assist local educational agencies and State agencies in the development and application of a systematic evaluation of programs in accordance with the models developed by the [Secretary].	These new regulations clearly spoke to the need for providing systematic, comparable and valid data on the effectiveness of Title I programs. In 1974, the U.S. Office of Education awarded a contract to initiate the development of an evaluation and reporting system that could be used by various consumer's of evaluation data from Title I programs including local educational agencies, state agencies and the U.S. Office of Education. RMC Research Corporation, the contractor for the development of the models, was charged to develop a set of models, reporting formats and other ancillary supporting forms, documents, materials and training strategies. Field work was conducted (1) to determine the current "state of the art" in terms of evaluation capability at state and local levels and (2) to determine how the models would work in these settings. The summer of 1976 witnessed preliminary work on the development of the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System (TIERS). At this point in time TIERS was not yet nationally implemented nor nationally mandated as the reporting system for Title I.

TABLE II (continued)

Evaluation from 1974 - 1978

"...(f) Specification of Objective Criteria. - The models developed by the [Secretary] shall specify the objective criteria which shall be utilized in the evaluation of all programs and shall outline techniques...and methodology... for producing data which are comparable on a statewide and nationwide basis."

"...(g) Report to Congress. - The [Secretary] shall make a [biennial] report to the respective committees of the Congress having jurisdiction over programs authorized by this title...concerning the results of evaluations of programs and projects required under this section, which shall be...based on the maximum extent possible on objective measures...."

"...(i) Maximum Expenditures. - The [Secretary] is authorized to expend such sums as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this section, but not to exceed one-half of 1 per centum of the amount appropriated for such programs... In carrying out the provisions of this section, the [Secretary] shall place priority on assisting States, local educational agencies, and State agencies to conduct evaluations and shall, only as funds are available after fulfilling that purpose, seek to conduct national evaluations of the program."

TABLE III

Evaluation from 1978 - 1981

EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS

TITLE I EVALUATION AND REPORTING SYSTEM (TIERS)

The objective of the Title I Evaluation and Reporting System (TIERS) was to provide meaningful, comparable information about Title I projects at the

- school building level,
- school district level,
- state level, and
- federal level.

Data were collected and/or aggregated on six topics: (1) participation, (2) parent advisory councils (PACs), (3) personnel, (4) training, (5) costs, and (6) impact. Impact data was gathered only from projects in the basic skill areas using one of the three evaluation models:

Model A - The norm-referenced model
Model B - The control group model
Model C - The special regression Model

IMPACT AND ISSUES

The implementation of the models as was mentioned above provoked debate from the technical to the programmatic in all sectors.

Operationally, even though 3 implementation models for TIERS were developed, Model A was the only model in use. Use of the other recommended models, or other approved models was extremely rare accounting for only 1 percent of the project evaluations.

With respect to model A, concerns were raised about the cumulative effects of statistical artifacts, unrepresentative norms, conversion errors, student selection, test administration procedures, attrition, and practice effects on the validity of estimates derived from TIERS.

Despite the technical concerns with the models and resistance in some cases to the implementation of the models, this forced intrusion of the federal government into the mandating of evaluation models at the national level forced state education agencies and local education agencies to take stock of their evaluation procedures. For some states, with strong evaluation units, TIERS posed no burden but for unsophisticated states relative to assessment and evaluation technology, the TIERS moved them from the darkness into the light.

TABLE IV

Evaluation from 1981 to Present

EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS EDUCATION CONSOLIDATION AND IMPROVEMENT ACT OF (1981)

(d) Records and information

"Each state educational agency shall keep such records and provide such information to the secretary as may be required for fiscal audit and program evaluation (consistent with the responsibilities of the secretary under this chapter)." (Section 555(d) ECIA, Chapter I)

(b) Application Assurances

"The application described in subsection (a) shall be approved if it provides assurances satisfactory to the State educational agency that the local educational agency will keep such records and provide such information to the state education agency as may be required for fiscal audit and program evaluation (consistent with the responsibilities of the state agency under this chapter), and that the programs and projects described." (Section 556(b), ECIA, Chapter I)

Sustained Gains

(4)"...Will be evaluated in terms of their effectiveness in achieving the goals set for them and that such evaluations shall include objective measurements of educational achievement in basic skills and a determination of whether improved performance is sustained over a period of more than one year." (Section 556(b)(4), ECIA, Chapter I)

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IMPACT AND ISSUES

With the impact of ECIA, Chapter I evaluation requirements, which were minimal at best, state directors of Chapter I programs officially adopted a stand of continuing the implementation of TIERS even though it was no longer mandated. The effort was laudable for a system now voluntary. As one can imagine, a system that no longer has binding controls begins to slacken. Informally, the consensus of state directors, evaluators and the federal, state and local levels and practitioners, is that strict evaluation requirements of TIERS are being loosened due to the voluntary nature of the system.

- Strict cut-offs are being violated.
- Selection and pre-test rules are abrogated.
- Quality control parameters have been slackened.
- Data edits have been reduced.
- Raw data are being crunched.
- Sampling errors are occurring.
- Negative gains are checked.
- Positive gains are not-checked.

Candidly, one questions the ability to generalize from the data at all, at a national level, given the problems cited above.

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